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RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000157

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND NEA/IPA, PRM FOR PRM/ANE; NSC FOR PASCUAL/PRATT; PLEASE PASS TO USAID FOR KUNDER/MCLOUD/BORODIN/NANDY/LAUDATO

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: ECON EAID PHUM KWBG ETRD IS CASC
SUBJECT: GAZA UPDATE JANUARY 20, 1500 LOCAL

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The Gaza ceasefire largely continues to hold. A single mortar landing near Nahal Oz and some IDF bulldozers were reported in the central part of the Gaza Strip. Kerem Shalom and the Karni conveyor belt are open for humanitarian and commercial supplies. End summary.

Crossings

¶12. (SBU) January 20: Kerem Shalom is open, as is the Karni conveyor belt. Nahal Oz fuel station is open only for industrial fuel for the power plant. (Note: Diesel has not entered Gaza since January 7 and cooking gas last entered on January 8. End Note.) About 20 trucks with medical supplies crossed from Egypt through Rafah.

Internal Movement/Distribution

¶13. (SBU) Twenty-four trucks carrying humanitarian supplies were reportedly intercepted by gunmen after leaving Kerem Shalom on January 19. (The convoy included 13 trucks from the Jordanian Charitable Society and 11 from the Egyptian Red Cross, and was en route to an UNRWA warehouse.) UNRWA reportedly managed to retrieve the hijacked goods early on January 20 and is not publicizing the incident.

Food

¶14. (SBU) Gaza contacts reported that bakeries are resuming operation and that there are increased supplies of basic commodities in stores.

Electricity and Water

¶15. (SBU) Power plant contacts said on January 20 that several key transmission lines in Gaza City remain down, but that the Gaza Electricity Distribution Company (GEDCO) has repaired several lines in recent days. Most Gaza homes receive 12-14 hours/day of electricity from the grid. The Gaza Power Plant is generating 30 MW of electricity as of January 20. OCHA contacts reported that at least 22 local transformers were damaged in north Gaza during the fighting.

¶16. (SBU) Gaza's Coast Municipality Water Utility (CMWU) chief engineer said on January 20 that technical teams are repairing broken lines and attempting to fix pumps. CMWU emphasized the need for spare parts and additional diesel fuel supplies.

Displacement

¶7. (SBU) UNRWA reported that 33 shelters remain in Gaza housing 19,000 people. UNRWA is attempting to reopen its schools (which currently serve as shelters) on January 24.

¶8. (SBU) Most displaced Gazans are from the north and have been staying with family members in Gaza City, according to UN and private sector contacts. Press reports estimated that 4,000 homes were destroyed in the fighting, while another 16,000 were partially destroyed.

Banks

¶9. (SBU) Local contacts reported on January 20 that banks are open, but have long lines. Banks are restricting withdrawals due to the shortage of banknotes in Gaza. UNRWA reported that it is attempting to transfer cash needed for its operations into Gaza on January 20.

UN Needs Assessment

¶10. (SBU) UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon visited Gaza on January 20. OCHA contacts reported that the UN is organizing an interagency rapid assessment, and anticipated that the final report should be complete by January 27-28. UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Response Coordinator John Holmes will arrive this week to lead the review process.

Evacuations

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¶11. (SBU) An evacuation of approximately 300 people is planned through Erez crossing to Jordan on January 21. This will include around 100 Amcits and their immediate family members. A second evacuation of up to 300 people, including 75-100 more Amcits and family members, is planned for January

¶12.

WALLES